Options for Accelerating Progress on Nuclear Disarmament Through the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons Dialogue and the NPT Process

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For decades, the risks posed by nuclear weapons use have driven global leaders, particularly the policymakers in states possessing nuclear weapons, to pursue concrete steps to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons use.

Recognizing this threat, the 2010 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference Final Document expresses "deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and [reaffirmed] the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law."

The lack of progress on key 2010 NPT disarmament goals has led many nonnuclear weapon states to organize a series of conferences focusing on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. A third conference will be held by Austria in Vienna later this year to evaluate how the humanitarian consequences dialogue can lead to concrete actions that reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles and risks and spur action before and after the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Speakers included:

- Ambassador Desra Percaya, Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations;
- Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, Senior Research Associate, Center for Nonproliferation Studies;
- Dr. Ira Helfand, Co-president, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War;
- George Perkovich, Director Nuclear Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace;
- Daryl Kimball, Executive Director, Arms Control Association (moderator).
DARYL KIMBALL: Well, good morning, everyone. I’m Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, and I want to welcome everyone to our forum this morning on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons dialogue and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty process. And we’re pleased this morning to be teaming up on this event with Physicians for Social Responsibility, an organization that I worked for once upon a time in the 1990s, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

And through the years, with the help of organizations like PSR, many of us have come to understand that the direct effects of large-scale nuclear conflict could result in several hundred millions human casualties and the indirect effects would be even greater. Nevertheless, the world’s nine nuclear-armed nations still threaten to use their massive nuclear arsenals in the name of deterrence, and many continue to build up their nuclear warfighting capabilities.

Recognizing this threat, the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review conference final document expresses deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and the conference reaffirmed the need for all states at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law. And as many of you know, the NPT states parties also agreed to certain actions to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use, including some 22 overlapping nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament – nuclear disarmament commitments and many more nonproliferation commitments.

Unfortunately, progress towards these goals has stalled – and we’ll hear more about that from some of our speakers today – for a range of reasons, not the least of which is the increasing friction between Washington and Moscow about whether and how to proceed beyond the New START Treaty with further nuclear reductions. Now, we are about a month away from the beginning of the final preparatory committee meeting before the 2015 NPT review conference, which as we’ll hear from our speakers, promises to be more contentious, to say the least, than the 2010 review conference.

Now, the concern about the severe consequences of nuclear weapons use has led many states, most of them non-nuclear weapon states, to organize and attend three international conferences focusing on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use, the first in Norway in 2013, the second in Mexico last month, and a third humanitarian consequences conference will be held in Austria, in Vienna, later this year, perhaps in December.

Here at our forum today, we’re going to be discussing these and other issues. We have, I think, a great lineup of expert speakers who are going to help us explore some key questions and issues, including the issues surrounding the upcoming NPT review conference, the origins and goals and next steps of the humanitarian consequences dialogue and whether the United States and other nuclear-armed states should participate, and how states can overcome the hurdles blocking progress on disarmament and accelerate progress to reduce nuclear risks before and after the 2015 NPT review conference.

So to start us off, we have Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova. She is senior research associate at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies here in Washington, and she’s going to discuss some of the dynamics of the NPT review process and the humanitarian consequences dialogue. She served as an expert for the Kazakh delegation at the 2010 NPT review conference and attended the Mexico conference last month at Nayarit. And she will also have an article in the upcoming issue of Arms Control Today, the journal of the Arms Control Association, on the 2015 NPT review conference situation.

Next we’ll hear from Dr. Ira Helfand, a longtime friend and colleague of mine from my PSR days. He will outline some of the latest findings of the direct and indirect effects of nuclear weapons use and his views on how states should respond to those findings. Ira is the co-president of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which of course won the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize for Peace. He is an emergency room physician and an internal medicine physician by training, and he’s a very excellent speaker and motivator and advocate for the elimination of nuclear weapons. He also spoke at the February conference in Mexico.

And we’re very pleased and honored also to have with us from New York Ambassador Desra Percaya of the Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations. He’s held a number of senior positions for his
government since joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1986. And in his current role, he’s been deeply involved in the disarmament debate at the U.N. and is among the leading voices in the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons dialogue.

And last but not least, we’ll hear from George Perkovitch, who’s director of the nuclear policy program and director of studies here at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and he’s a longtime and keen observer and scholar and advocate for advancing the nonproliferation and disarmament objectives of the NPT.

So after each of the speakers makes their remarks, about 12 minutes or so each, we’ll take your questions and comments and get into what I think will be a very lively and interesting discussion.

So with that introduction, Gaukhar, if you could lead us off this morning.

GAUKHAR MUKHATZHANOVA: Thank you.

Thank you very much, Daryl and Arms Control Association and Carnegie Endowment, for organizing the event, and Physicians for Social Responsibility as well, and for having me here. It’s indeed a privilege to share the panel with these speakers.

Daryl has asked me to first of all cover the major issues ahead of the 2015 NPT review conference and then to go a bit deeper into the humanitarian dimension, its origins and its role. And I’ll try to do that. I will not cover all the main issues because it will take a lot of time, but we’ll be happy to return, you know, to them during the question and answers.

I also must note that I hear there is an event next door at Brookings about Iran negotiations, so that led me to think that we need just to organize a Middle East event somewhere in a third location, and that will cover all the main issues for – (laughter) – for the 2015 review conference.

And there are a number of reasons for that, all of them historical, but even – but going back to the treaty negotiation, you would know that it’s the uneven distribution of rights and obligations within the treaty and this promise of pursuing nuclear disarmament that’s contained in Article 6 of the NPT – these two are really the main reasons we have an NPT review process, though, because the non-nuclear states wanted that kind of leverage, to go back every five years. So it’s not surprising, it’s not illogical that nuclear disarmament has been a perennial concern and has always been central to the review conferences. And 2010 was not an exception; 2015 will not be either.

And then in 1995, Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction also was added to this – to the ranks of key issues for the NPT, and since then it was really nuclear disarmament in the Middle East that have been key to outcomes and lack thereof of the NPT review conferences, and that’s, you know, the crash and burn of 2005 was very much due to these two issues.

And then when we came back to the (reborn ?) process in 2010, again, some kind of agreement progress on the Middle East and on nuclear disarmament were critical to achieving a consensus outcome. And so so far, the progress on implementing either set of decisions has been let’s say less than impressive, and that does spell trouble for 2015 because these issues are not going away, and they will be central at the next review conference.

A little bit on the Middle East. The decision, as you well know, the main step adopted by the review conference in 2010 was that there should be a conference, regional conference, with the participation of all states in the Middle East on the establishment of the zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The conference was supposed to convene in 2012. Obviously, we’ve missed the deadline, and so far there is no new date. It led to quite a fallout at the previous prepcom in Geneva.

But today the situation looks a lot less dire, and I’m actually cautiously optimistic, the reason being that it’s in the past six months, there have been several rounds of informal consultations organized by the facilitator, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava. And for the first time we actually had Israel and a number of Arab states and on one occasion Iran as well sitting in one room and actually talking
about business, about, you know, their concerns, about the agenda, possible outcomes, modalities of
the conference. So that's clearly progress. They still haven't agreed on the agenda. There is no
date. But I'm reasonably optimistic that they would like to actually end up with the Middle East
conference before 2015.

Now, does that mean smooth sailing? No. I think the absence of the Middle East review conference
will certainly be a tremendous hurdle. I don't think it will be possible to have consensus without the
Middle East. But even with the Middle East conference, I think what we're heading is a much bigger
kind of more profound confrontation potentially between nuclear and non-nuclear states and then
some division within the non-nuclear weapon states about the appropriate progress of disarmament,
the rate of implementation of the action plan and the approach to it – you know, there is a lot of
emphasis on the step-by-step approach, and then there is also the conversation about the more
comprehensive approach. I think this has been – the past two-three years have been very important
in the development of that kind of – of that kind of conversation.

The action plan that was adopted in 2010 was very much the product of the initial idea to have an
action plan of disarmament, which is why the disarmament section is formed – formulated in the
most actionable terms. So a lot of focus will be on the limitation of the action plan, the first 22
items.

And so far, there is not much to show in terms of its implementation. The actions that are doing the
best have to do with bilateral arms reduction. So New START Treaty is being implemented according
to its provisions. There – seems to be everything going all right. But the discussion on the follow-on
steps, as you’re well aware, is at a standstill, so there is – there has been no progress – no prospect
of new U.S.-Russian treaty even before the developments in Ukraine. And now with those
developments, it really seems like the situation is quite hopeless. United Kingdom is the only
country that announced unilateral reductions since 2010. China seems to be increasing its arsenal,
not that we would know it from their official sources, and that, you know, it’s linked to the problem of
transparency, and that’s also quite central. And the United States was sort of expected to announce
unilateral reductions, but again, that got linked to the U.S.-Russian progress, and the prospects are
not good.

What, however, is more important to non-nuclear weapon states, rather than the numerical
reductions, is the very question of the role of nuclear weapons and nuclear security in national
security, in doctrines in the – in the alliance, defense alliances. And there the situation has remained
largely the same. Since 2010 there was some movement in the U.K., in the United States, but so far
not to the point of the sole purpose doctrine, you know, when nuclear weapons are – the only
purpose is to deter a nuclear attack and nothing else. Russia – in Russia, nuclear weapons are very
central to national security strategy. France just released a white paper on defense a year ago
where they reaffirmed the role of nuclear weapons as central, as the guarantee of national
sovereignty and security. So these are all very bad signs for non-nuclear weapon states for the long
term, and these matters more than, you know, a little – you know, some material disposition or some
reductions in deployed weapons. Furthermore, all five are engaged in modernization, and so that is
also a signal for non-nuclear weapon states about the continued and long-term projected reliance on
nuclear weapons by the – by the nuclear weapon states. And so this is – this will all will – this will all
be discussed in 2015. That will be very central.

A lot of focus has been since 2010 on this new process, and there were two new process that
developed. One of the humanitarian initiative that we’re talk – we’ll talk about, and the other
process is the so-called P-5, the consultations among the nuclear weapon states on a range of
issues, including disarmament and other NPT-related developments. The five nuclear weapon states
are expected to report on this engagement, on the results of these engagements, on the progress in
April or beginning May at the prepcom. And again, the reporting is going to be very modest. The
expectations among non-nuclear weapons states have been high, but nuclear weapon states have
played them down. The – so far, what they worked on primarily was transparency in reporting,
verification and a so-called glossary of nuclear terminology. And initially, it was supposed to focus
on arms control disarmament and got expanded to nuclear security, nonproliferation issues. They –
significantly, they did manage to adopt a standard reporting form to talk about their arsenal, about
the doctrine, about arms control disarmament activities. On the downside, however, it’s not going to
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be unified report. There’s a standard. And then each state is going to report what that state feels comfortable, so it’s going to – again, it’s not going to be sort of a one kind of approach.

But more fundamentally, there seems to be, in this – in this kind of slow progress, there seems to be lack of urgency on nuclear disarmament on the part of nuclear weapon states. A lot of it has to do with how they view the action plan. They view it in a very long term, long-term prospect. And you can see it in the language that is used and statements by nuclear weapon states. You know, it’s a road map, you know, it’s a slow process. And that contrasts very much to the non-nuclear weapon states’ expectations. They may not have expected the action plan to be implemented by 2015. That was certainly unrealistic. But, you know, are we talking about a 50-year horizon or 60-year horizon? And how does that go together with the modernization plans?

And so as a reaction to that kind of incremental step-by-step, very slow long-term approach, the non-nuclear weapon states have been putting on their own initiatives in the past two or three years, and it’s been really interesting to see that development. And humanitarian initiative is one of those very bright manifestations of non-nuclear weapon states taking the initiative back and reclaiming the ownership of nuclear disarmament issues and reclaiming their place in the debate that they also can influence, that they can influence the terms of the discourse.

And where it began, as Daryl mentioned, is in 2010 review conference. It expressed concern about catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any nuclear weapon use. And then that was picked up also by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent. There was a council of delegates movement meeting, and they adopted a resolution calling on states to make sure that nuclear weapons are never used again, regardless of the states’ views on their legality; another debate that’s been developing recently is, you know, whether nuclear weapons should be considered legal at all.

And the point of the humanitarian initiative debate is to really shift the focus from what is a traditional NPT debate on nuclear weapons centered on state security, centered on strategy and stability, all those, you know, warm relatable human terms, and actually shift it to the question of what do these weapons do and what are the effects and whether that is compatible with who we are as humans, whether we as humanity should tolerate their continued existence and, if not, what should be done about that. So really, the focus is not on the possessors, on good, bad, good guys, bad guys; the focus is on weapons and their effects. And the people promoting the initiative have been very specific about emphasizing that point.

So the message clearly has a lot of appeal. The message is very inclusive. It broadens the debate. It goes beyond the – beyond the NPT room. It goes beyond the diplomatic circles. It involves the humanitarian organizations. Civil society very much took up the – took up the issues. So it’s really a much more dynamic conversation we’re used to in the NPT conference rooms. And you can see the growing momentum in the way the joint statements on the humanitarian initiative have been gathering support. It started with the 16-nation statement and the 2012 NPT prepcom, and the latest joint statement was delivered at the first committee last October, and it was already higher at 125 states that signed up.

So – but along with the – with being a unifying initiative for a lot of non-nuclear weapon states, I think what happened is that also it exacerbated a lot of the tensions the pre-existed in the NPT and just were, you know, sort of hushed over and not in the foreground, and a lot of it has to do with a difference of views between nuclear – non-nuclear weapon states in and outside of nuclear alliances. So you will see a much more cautious approach to the humanitarian initiative by states like Germany, like the Netherlands, like Japan, who traditionally have been nuclear disarmament advocates, but now they find themselves in a difficult position. They cannot sign up to statements that say, you know, nuclear weapons should not be used under any circumstances because they are in the alliances that foresee potential use of nuclear weapons. I think all that has been boiling up and developing and snowballing.

And if nothing major happens by May 2015, I think that issue will be central to the review conference, this divergence of views about what constitutes an appropriate approach to nuclear disarmament, what is the appropriate debate, what is the appropriate rate of progress, and what are the next steps. And this will be a very contentious debate. And it might be very bad for the treaty
the short term. And there have been a lot of discussion about how it is a distraction from the NPT, how it is a distraction from the action plan. The reaction of nuclear weapon states have been very negative. They boycotted collectively both conferences – boycotted collectively the first conference in Oslo and then also individually did not show up in Nayarit last month. So yes, on the – on the one hand, in the short term, there is an exacerbation of tensions and disagreements.

But I think it’s a very healthy debate for the NPT in the long term because we can – we can move incrementally on small steps, and they have been good steps. They have been good positive developments, but very small. And that – and that really shines a light on the fundamental question, you know. Are we very – are we really serious about accomplishing disarmament, or do we have second thoughts? And I’ve heard some second thoughts in Geneva last year about, or, maybe disarmament is destabilizing, maybe disarmament is not what we really want. And this – these questions have to be asked. And I think states really have to be made to do some soul-searching about what kind of role for nuclear weapons they see in their national security concepts, whether or not they possess nuclear weapons. And so I think – I think it may – it may be a very problematic 2015 review conference, but it’s like having therapy, you know; you have to face them, you have to face some of those hairy issues to actually come to some kind of – some kind of development. And so I’ll try to finish this on a very optimistic tone. Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Thank you. Thank you for the great overview of a lot of different developments.

Ira Helfand, if you could please take it away.

IRA HELFAND: Thanks. Thank you for that very, very nice and powerful review of where we are.

What I want to talk to you about a little bit right now is just indeed the humanitarian message that has so I think empowered and motivated this campaign. Back in the 1980s there was a very, very widespread understanding of what was going to happen if there were a nuclear war. People knew what these weapons could do, lots of people, millions of people. We’ve lost that understanding, by and large. Certainly, in the general population, there is very little understanding about what nuclear weapons can do or even how many there are in the world. People of my generation have actively put it out of their minds and don’t think about it at all, and there have been generations that have come of age since the end of the Cold War that never lived through that stuff and never knew this material at all.

And it has been our belief, Physicians for Social Responsibility, international physicians, that this information is critical to the debate at the simplest level because you need to have informed consent. People need to know what they’re taking about when they make decisions. And as a tactical or a policy level, perhaps, for the reasons that Gaukhar explained so nicely, that if you have this as the starting point, what happens if the weapons are used, that conditions the entire conversation in a very different way than if you start with, oh, where are we today, and what can we accomplish this week and so on.

So let me just kind of go over some of the data that’s emerged.

There are basically I think two ways of looking at this. One is small-scale nuclear war, in quotes, and the other is large-scale nuclear war. And what is really quite new I think is the discovery in the last eight years, starting in 2006, that even a very limited use of nuclear weapons would be something that cause global – a global catastrophe. The papers that were published in 2006 by Tunun Robak (ph) looked at a scenario in which India and Pakistan go to war, 50 warheads on each side. They were criticized at that time for a worst-case scenario. We now know this is far from the worst-case scenario. India and Pakistan each have closer to a hundred warheads; any of them are substantially larger than the Hiroshima bomb.

Warheads in that scenario were about the size of the Hiroshima bomb. They were criticized at that time for a worst-case scenario. We now know this is far from the worst-case scenario. India and Pakistan each have closer to a hundred warheads; any of them are substantially larger than the Hiroshima bomb.

But sticking with the original scenario, they found that in a countervalue war in which cities were targeted, perhaps as many as 20 million people would be killed in the first week directly from the explosions, from the firestorm, from the direct radiation, something really quite unprecedented. I mean, in all of World War II, about 50 million people died, and that was over eight years. This is 20
million people dying in the course of a single week.

What they found that was much more disturbing even than that was the fact that this limited use of nuclear weapons, less – well less than half of a percent of the world’s nuclear arsenals, causes profound global climate disruption. Temperatures worldwide drop about 1.3 degrees centigrade, and this effect lasts for about a decade. Now, 1.3 degrees centigrade does not necessarily sound like a very large change of temperature, but to put it into context, in the last 130 years, the global warming, which so demands everyone’s attention, has amounted to seven-tenths of a degree. So this would be a change twice that magnitude and occurring at about three days’ time. As a result of that, there would also be a very significant disruption of global precipitation patterns. When the atmosphere cools, less water evaporates from the oceans to fall back as rain and snow.

And as a result of these combined effects, it was our concern there would be a very profound impact on food production. In the last couple of years, we’ve been able to look at this and examine a number of key staple crops around the world. We’ve looked at corn production here in the United States, the world’s largest producer of corn, and found that on average, it goes down about 12 percent over a full decade. We looked at rice production in China, the world’s largest producer of rice, and found that on average, the Chinese rice crop goes down about 17 percent for a full decade.

Based on those figures alone, we issued a report in April of 2012 suggesting that up to a billion people worldwide could die of famine. Why? Because at baseline today, there are 870 million people in the world who are malnourished. They’re getting about 1,800 calories a day, which is just enough to maintain their body mass and able them to do a very limited amount of physical work, to gather food or to grow food.

There are also about 300 million people in the world who are well-nourished today but who live in countries which are highly dependent on food imports. And in the event of the kind of crop disruption that we are going to see in the aftermath of a limited nuclear war, international commerce in grain is going to be profoundly disrupted, and it is quite likely that these countries will not be able to import enough food to feed their people.

Now, since then we’ve been able to do a little bit of additional work, and in particular, we’re able to look at wheat production in China. The wheat crop in China is just a little bit smaller than the rice crop. It is a major staple food, principal staple in northern China. And it turns out that wheat is much more profoundly affected than rice production. Rice goes down about 17 percent for a decade; wheat production in China goes down about 31 percent for a decade. And in the first five years, it’s down 39 percent.

And looking at those figures, we have had to revise our predictions of what we think the effect of this famine will be, because in the initial work, we assumed that China would not be directly affected, that China would be able to feed its people, and looking at this kind of new data, it - that is in question. China is better prepared than the developing world to withstand this kind of famine. People are better nourished to begin with, and the grain reserves in China are substantially bigger in terms of days of consumption than the global grain reserves are. Despite that, a 31 percent decline in wheat and a 17 percent decline in rice is beyond the capability of China to deal with, and it is highly likely that there’ll be widespread hunger in China as well – another 1.3 billion people at risk, if not all of these people facing actual starvation, certainly the country as a whole facing profound economic and social disruption for a full decade. It’s the largest country in the world, the country with the world’s second-largest economy.

We have never had an event like this in human history where anywhere from 15 to 30 percent of the human population dies over the course of a decade. And this is a real possibility in the event of a war between India and Pakistan, which is itself a real possibility. There has been fighting on the India-Pakistan border in Kashmir on a daily basis over the last year. Both countries are rapidly expanding their nuclear arsenal, as I’m sure all of you know. And this is not some kind of abstract worst-case fantasy that you can cook up in a think tank. This is the reality that we’re facing.

And it has enormous implications, obviously, for nuclear policy in South Asia, but it has huge implications as well for the nuclear policies of the larger nuclear powers. Each U.S. Trident
submarine can carry up to 96 warheads, each of which is 10 to 30 times more powerful than the bombs that we used in our scenario. And that means that each Trident submarine is capable of causing this global nuclear famine many times over, and we have 14 of them – and that’s only one leg of the triad. And the Russian nuclear forces contain the same - I use this in a clinical sense - insane level of overkill capacity.

We – I think we also need to consider the possibility of even more large-scale war than just this limited scenario. I was told in a meeting with the State Department last year that the United States does not worry about a nuclear war; it is only concerned with nuclear terrorism and the nuclear weapons of rogue states. I countered at the time that I don’t – didn’t think we should be so sanguine that the U.S. and Russia could never find themselves in an adversary position. And even if we didn’t use the weapons deliberately, there was always the possibility of an accidental nuclear war. And as we all know, we have come perilously close on many occasions to nuclear hostility during the last 30 years because of various kinds of technical failures. Obviously, the events in Ukraine underline the fact that the U.S. and Russia still could find themselves in a direct adversarial position and one in which nuclear weapons are used.

The effects of a large-scale war dwarf even the horrors that I’ve just described from the India-Pakistan war. A study that we released in 2002 show that if only 300 warheads in the Russian arsenal detonated over targets in American urban areas, something between 75 and a hundred million people would be dead in the first 30 minutes, and a U.S. counterattack on Russia would cause the same kind of destruction. We chose the figure 300, by the way, to represent an 80 percent success rate of a hypothetical missile defense system, which, of course, doesn’t exist and would never be that effective, but even if you put something that effective in place, of the 1,500 warheads on the Russian side, 300 would get through.

And this is what they would do. In addition to killing this many people in half an hour, this attack would also completely destroy the economic infrastructure of this country. All of the things that we rely on to maintain our population, the public health system, the banking system, the public transportation, the communications networks, it would all be gone. And we depend on these systems functioning at an intact mode to maintain our population. You know, we’re not hunter-gatherers or subsistence farmers. We go to the supermarket to buy our food. And if the supermarkets don’t have food, then we starve. And it is probable that in the aftermath of this war, the 200 million not killed outright in the first wave of the attack, the vast majority of those people would also die from starvation, from exposure when they couldn’t heat their homes, from epidemic disease and from radiation poisoning.

But again, as, I mean, mind-boggling as this kind of direct toll is, it is not the worst part of the story because a war between the United States and Russia also causes profound climate disruption. A hundred small warheads in South Asia put 5 million tons of debris into the upper atmosphere and dropped global temperatures 1.3 degrees centigrade.

A war between the United States and Russia, using only those weapons which are still allowed when New START is fully implemented in 2017 – that war puts 150 million tons of debris into the atmosphere, and it drops global temperatures 8 degrees centigrade on average. In the interior regions of Eurasia and North America, the temperature decline is 25 to 30 degrees centigrade. We have not seen temperatures on this planet that cold in 18,000 years, since the coldest moment of the last ice age. In the temperate zones of the Northern Hemisphere, there would be three years without a single day free of frost. Temperature goes below freezing at some point every single day for three years. And that means there is no agriculture, there is no food production. Most of the ecosystems in this zone collapse. The vast majority of the human race starves to death, and it is possible that we become extinct as a species.

Now, if that is the starting point of the conversation, the next thing that flows from that is these weapons cannot exist. We know that there is a real and finite possibility every day that they will be used. And if that is true, then it is simply a matter of time until they actually are used, and that means they cannot be allowed to exist. And that is a very different starting point than where we are in the current conversation about disarmament. And that’s why this argument, I think, has become so powerful.
The plans of the nuclear weapon states to maintain their nuclear arsenals indefinitely – and those do appear to be their plans. That’s certainly how their plans are perceived by the non-nuclear-weapons states. That approach is simply unacceptable, and we need a fundamentally different new approach.

We are accused often of being unrealistic when we talk about the possibility of, say, medium-term nuclear disarmament. I would argue that it is those who defend the status quo, who say that we can continue to maintain these arsenals for decades into the future, who are profoundly unrealistic. The chance that this is going to happen, that we’re going to maintain these arsenals indefinitely and that they’re not going to be used, is very low, and it’s certainly not a risk which any rational person would entertain.

And so we need to have a very different approach to all of this. And they say that politics is the art of the possible. Statesmanship, I think, is clearly the art of the necessary. And it is time that we ask our leaders to act like statesmen, not like politicians. It’s time that we demand that behavior of them. And I think that’s what this whole movement is about at this point. It is calling the nuclear weapons states, saying that we will not accept their behavior anymore, and demanding that they change.

Let me stop there. Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Thank you very much, Ira.

Ambassador Percaya, the perspective from Indonesia, please. Thanks for being here.

AMBASSADOR DESRA PERCAYA: Thank you very much, Daryl, for Arms Control Association for inviting me to be here in D.C. It gives me the opportunity to see the sun because New York is always gloomy now.

If you look at the discussion on the issue, there have been at least three encouraging developments. First, there has been much renewed focus on the issue by civil society, academics, think tanks, as well as government. Secondly, if you look at the discussion, if you look at the conference, it has become more intensified and regularized. And thirdly, there are countries joining the statement in the NPT PrepComs as well as General Assembly session.

However, there is still unclarity on what exactly does the humanitarian approach offer and where it leads to. So let me begin by stating what I understand that the humanitarian approach is not. It is not about discounting the security value of nuclear weapons or specifically disputing the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence or laying out particular actions for complete nuclear disarmament. For Indonesia, for my country, we support the discourse on humanitarian consequences because it is useful in spreading a rights-based approach and deepening the humanistic development as well as environmental argument. It helps to delegitimize nuclear weapons and their whole pretext.

For many countries, including Indonesia, the discussion on the utility of nuclear weapons ended by itself with the entry into force of the NPT. All members or parties of the NPT have legally and morally committed themselves to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, period. Since we are all agreed on the elimination of nuclear weapons, the only questions remaining are when and how. Unfortunately, the so-called 13 practical steps as well as the 2010 review conference’s action plan do not set a deadline for their elimination. It is also unfortunate that the U.N. disarmament machinery remains mired in a political deadlock, with no meaningful progress at the CD in negotiating a comprehensive nuclear convention, along with other needed disarmament instruments.

This is where the humanitarian approach comes into play. The humanitarian consequences debate and related activism by the civil society, academia and youth can play a powerful role in increasing awareness as well as political will on nuclear disarmament. That is why I believe that at the upcoming Vienna conference on the humanitarian consequences, all states and relevant stakeholders should participate.
The examination of the debate on humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has at least, I could identify, revealed two fundamentally important truths. First, because nuclear weapons affect all states, they have a direct stake – they have a direct stake in ensuring their elimination. All states have a legitimate role to play, and it is their responsibility to act. It is not something that can be left to the nuclear weapons states to be done by them on their own. This is the first truth.

Second, the world cannot wait endlessly for nuclear weapons’ elimination. The risks are obvious. For a nuclear detonation, deliberate or accidental, its effects will be horrendous on people and all living things – we will all suffer. We must act now.

It is these truths which have energized the non-nuclear-weapons states and civil society and unsettled P-5. It is time the consequences of these truths reshape and energize global efforts on nuclear disarmament and the multilateral security landscape gets revamped.

What do these truths mean for the NPT specifically? I believe that they mean taking a fresh look at the treaty, its review process and seeing it that the treaty is universalized. Take Article VI, for example. We are used to thinking about it as the article dealing with nuclear weapons states. We invoke it to press the P-5 into moving on disarmament. We measure their progress against its exasperatingly vague provisions, and we complain when we feel they are failing to comply it. But Article VI is not just about nuclear weapons states. It applies to each of the parties to the treaty, and it requires us all to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures related to cessation of nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.

So in light of the humanitarian approach, what we want so purely as a neglected obligation of the P-5, we now see as a license and a requirement for action by non-nuclear-weapons states. And we have to pursue effective measures to discharge our obligations under this article.

We cannot stop by objections from the nuclear weapons states to the humanitarian consequences approach, who see it as a distraction that is diverting attention from the NPT. This initiative is derived from the NPT’s own preamble, which makes reference to, I quote, the devastation that will be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need – and then – and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to make measures to safeguard the security of peoples.

Therefore, the nuclear weapons states should be involved in the humanitarian approach, including, I believe, by participating at the next meeting in Vienna on the basis of their treaty obligations. Bearing in mind as well that the Vienna conference will be held just before the 2015 NPT review conference, I hope that during the Vienna conference, member states or parties can also discuss practical ways to further integrate the humanitarian initiative into the NPT framework in order to further transform all the compelling science behind this initiative into norms and actions.

This brings me to the NPT review process. What does the humanitarian approach mean for that? I think the main implication is one of accountability. The NPT must deliver specific measures on nuclear disarmament, and deliver them within a clearly defined short time frame.

For too long, the non-nuclear-weapons states have been on an endless treadmill of hope and disappointment. After the hope inspired by the 2010 action plan, we are already hearing the telltale sounds of excuses being prepared and mutterings that the action plan was never meant to be for five years only. Of course, we do not expect nuclear weapons to be eliminated overnight, but we cannot also continue to tolerate endless procrastination, poorly defined goals and timelines that are fake to the point of absurdity.

I believe that driven the – I believe that driven by the humanitarian imperative, we must push for greater accountability in the NPT review process and the U.N. disarmament machinery. These frameworks are essential, but they must deliver. They will deliver when we will fulfill our obligations in them, work together better and bring to bear the required political capital. While Gaukhar is optimistic, I am cautiously optimistic.
Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. We’ve heard the word “insane” and “absurd” used. George, can you provide us with some insights –

GEORGE PERKOVICH: Was that my introduction, insane? I’m sorry – (inaudible) – (laughter) –

MR. KIMBALL: That was your introduction. (Laughter.)

MR. PERKOVICH: I’ve been called worse.

MR. KIMBALL: It’s now for you to help us deal with the absurdities and the insanities. So thank you.

MR. PERKOVICH: Thanks, Daryl. I like that introduction.

MR. KIMBALL: You’re up to the task.

MR. PERKOVICH: The – I mean, I – let me start by saying I think, you know, one of Ira’s points was profoundly important, not to say that the others weren’t, but – and that is the question about, you know, how probable it could be that if we go on the present course and nuclear weapons are retained that over the next hundred years, they won’t be used. I mean, I think that’s ultimately an argument that a lot of defenders of nuclear weapons in the status quo can’t engage. They’re very happy to say that nuclear weapons have prevented major war or the reason why there hasn’t been major power war since 1945, but it’s much harder to look farther ahead. So I think that’s a very important point.

And also, I would say by way of preface, I come at this issue as someone who has worked a lot on and written a lot on nuclear disarmament, and so often am in discussions and debates around the world where I’m the abolition advocate. So that’s by way of prefacing what are doubts that I will try to explain about not necessarily the discourse on humanitarian consequences, but then the segue from that to promoting a convention to ban nuclear weapons.

And I think that’s the distinction I want to make, so – because in part, I think the – some of the arguments made about humanitarian consequences are too categorical in many ways, and so they invite factual dispute, which I think ought to be had. I think that debate ought to be had, but you can talk with military planners; you can talk with weapon designers, and they can give you scenarios which they in many ways and political leaders in many ways would say are the most likely scenarios for the use of nuclear weapons, which would be a warning shot, perhaps at sea, destroying a naval ship, but it’s a military target at sea, one use with a low-yield weapon, and that argument has to be engaged. And it’s difficult to – you know, to necessarily accept as a fact, and probably in a court of law it wouldn’t be accepted as a fact that that would ipso facto create a humanitarian disaster.

Now, there are counterarguments to that as to, OK, how does the escalation end; so you did that; how do they retaliate, and how do you not get escalation? I think that’s the debate that ought to be had. But sometimes just the categorical assertions that any use would be a humanitarian disaster, I think invites dismissal and is problematic. I can go into other concerns, but they all branch off that basic problem.

That said, I think the nuclear weapons states make a huge mistake by not engaging in this debate, by boycotting as they did the meeting in Norway, as they did in Mexico, and as they may do in the future. I think it’s a terrible mistake for several reasons. One, these issues are inherently important. They’re profoundly important for reasons that Ira and others posit. So it’s kind of – it’s irresponsible and unseemly that any state, but especially states who happen to be permanent members of the Security Council, would not engage in a discussion and a debate on issues of such profound importance. So it – to me, it’s indefensible.

I think they’re also mistaken for practical reasons, which is that their main – well, they – there are different views. For example, in France, you get a different view than in the United Kingdom, and in
Russia you get a different view than China, and the U.S. is somewhere in the middle. But if you can kind of group them, a legitimate concern they have is to focus on nonproliferation, and they’re worried about proliferation and how we deal with Iran and how you strengthen the capacity to detect undeclared nuclear facilities and all of that and are saying, well, this discussion will distract from that. That’s a valid concern, but it’s – but their argument about it doesn’t kind of prove itself. And so I think they need to be there to have that engagement, and in fact, if that’s their biggest worry, then the way to deal with it, I would argue, is to take on this issue and to address it and to show up and have the discussions.

In my sense, the debate is super important to have about humanitarian consequences, but it’s really important also to have not just in the U.S. Try to have this debate in Russia. Good luck right now, but you know, but that’s – but it’s not a trivial proposition to have this discussion in Israel right now, to have this discussion in France. To have this discussion in Estonia right now would be interesting after what’s happened in Ukraine, to have this discussion in Poland, to have this discussion in South Korea when there’s firing over the last 24 hours and North Korea may be prepared to conduct a nuclear test.

Try to have this discussion in Pyongyang about humanitarian consequences of anything. And why I say that is not to be flip, but that’s precisely what Japan and South Korea are thinking about, right, just like the eastern states in NATO are thinking about what just happened in Crimea, and it affects the way they think about nuclear weapons. The same is true of humanitarian issues in North Korea and what their neighbors fear.

And by the way, that’s probably the biggest driver of U.S. nuclear policy right now. If you go talk to people who make policy, including in the White House, what’s driving them is how to reassure allies in the eastern part of NATO and in South Korea and Japan, how to reassure them that in this environment, we’ve got their back and that they’ll be defended. Now, I would argue and welcome the chance to argue that nuclear weapons aren’t relevant to that, but that’s not how it’s perceived there, and that’s a great pressure on U.S. policy.

And so I think this debate needs to be had in all of those places if it’s to be responsible and if it’s to have a chance to actually move the ball.

What I’m alluding to in a way is what we need to ask to the states that possess nuclear weapons is how do you deal with the humanitarian issues? Do you recognize humanitarian law, first of all? Secondly, do you – do you recognize that it may apply to the use of nuclear weapons? If not, why not? If so, OK, then how do you think about that, and how does your arsenal and your doctrine and your policy reflect a respect for humanitarian law which you otherwise profess? I think that’s a big part of what should be the discussion.

But I think similarly, coming back to advocates of eliminating nuclear weapons by a convention, you have to say, how do you deal with aggression? How do you deal with threats of major aggression? Because it seems to me on the one hand, as long as nuclear weapons exist, then there is a risk of humanitarian disaster, but as long as there – threats of massive aggression exist, then there’ll be nuclear weapons. And so how do you reconcile those or bring those two issues together?

And we’ve just had last week what to me was a chilling reminder of this tension, and that was the U.N. General Assembly vote on the Russian action in Crimea. General proposition was it violated international law; it was an act of aggression. Well, look at the vote. The abstainers were – among the abstainers, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, leaders of the New Agenda Coalition who’ve been urging a ban on nuclear weapons. So here’s an opportunity just to have a vote in the General Assembly to describe something as aggression, which by all indications it was; they pass. They abstained. Others didn’t show up. How is that to give confidence then to the rest of the world, you know, if you’re facing threats of aggression, we’ve got your back; you don’t need nuclear weapons? Can’t even get a vote on this issue.

And by the way, the Budapest agreement, which was –
MR. PERKOVICH: – the document in 1994 that Ukraine signed with the U.S., the United Kingdom and Russia as Ukraine handed over its nuclear weapons to Russia. So this was a disarmament and nonproliferation agreement. In that agreement, the states, especially Russia, promised Ukraine that there would be no threat to its territorial integrity. So that starkly violated, very pertinent to the issue of nuclear weapons, and then you get this vote, and some of the biggest advocates of the convention abstained. To me, that should be a big – a big debate as well.

Final points, and then just to summarize, it seems to me that while it’s absolutely vital and important to promote a debate on humanitarian consequences, and it’s totally indefensible for the states with nuclear weapons to avoid that debate, not show up and so on, I would also say that focusing then on a convention to ban nuclear weapons actually undermines the argument. It’s counterproductive, in part because it will provoke resistance and dismissal because some of the factual issues, and it will distract from this effort that otherwise can put these guys on defensive and get at questions not only of nuclear weapons, but of aggression, which seems to me are the underlying issues that have to be addressed.

Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: All right, thank you very much, George, for those reminders and questions that I think everyone needs to think about who is involved in this discussion.

I think we had four very rich presentations, and some clear areas of agreement, some questions that I think provoke thinking on the panel and in the audience. I want to invite our distinguished audience – and we have some very smart people in the crowd who I can see – to offer your comments, questions about what you’ve heard, and if you have a thought, question, raise your hand. We will bring to you a microphone. If you could just identify yourself, we’ll start with the gentleman in the back where the microphone is. Thank you.

Q: Thanks, Daryl. Appreciate it. I have a question for the first two speakers, and thank you all for the presentations.

MR. KIMBALL: Just identify –

Q: Sorry, Justin Anderson, SAIC. I’m struck, actually, by a bit of divergence, unintentional, in your presentations. And here’s the divergence. Doctor, you speak of challenges within the NPT, just a dissention between the nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear-weapons states. And then Dr. Helfand, you began your presentation with a discussion of the papers that discuss a possible nuclear conflict in South Asia and the consequences of that. Well, of course, India and Pakistan aren’t NPT members. So my question – and it’s really for the panel – is, is the NPT an – you know, while perhaps flawed and imperfect, nonetheless the right way to move forward? And if you’re really concerned about nuclear use by South Asian states or by North Korea, perhaps all the NPT member states should set aside some of their disagreements for now and press those outside the NPT to join. Or is there some sort of alternate means, alternate to the NPT, perhaps along the humanitarian conference track that’s been going on right now, that ultimately is a better means to move forward? And it’s an open question because I was struck by the fact – all this discussion about possible nuclear war in South Asia, and yet those are two non-NPT states. It’s totally outside the NPT on this. Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Right. OK. All right, who would like to respond to that? Gaukhar and then Ira.

MS. MUKHATZHANOVA: Thank you for the question. I keep getting promoted today. I’m not a doctor. (Laughter.)

You pose a very important question, and that does go back to the point that this is not about the possessor; it’s just about the weapons, which means we can talk about the five, we can talk about India and Pakistan, we can talk about Israel, we can talk about North Korea. And the study that Dr. Helfand presented is only one of the discussions – the presentations that took place in Oslo and in Nayarit. There were conversations about the weapon – you know, a one nuclear weapon detonation
in Manhattan, and there are different studies being done about where nuclear weapons can be used and what it would do to that area. What’s important about this study in particular is about – is that it really brings home the message that it doesn’t matter really where they’re going to be used; we’re all going to be affected. And countries that gave up on the very idea of nuclear weapons a decade, two, three ago will be affected the most, countries in Africa, countries in Southeast Asia. So yeah, it’s – I think it’s a much more inclusive debate.

About whether we should set aside differences in the NPT, certainly. And actually, the humanitarian initiative promoters never meant to make it an alternative to the NPT. If you look at who the major promoters are, they’re also very active NPT states parties. Ireland takes a tremendous offense at this – at the suggestion that they are undermining the NPT because remember the Irish resolutions and the role that Ireland played in promoting the negotiation of the NPT. They’re very much committed to the treaty, but they’re also very frustrated with the way it’s being implemented, or not implemented. So they view this debate as feeding into the NPT, as re-energizing the debate within the NPT, but not leading away from it. And I think that’s the very profound disagreement right now between those who are suspicious about the true motivations of the initiative. There are arguments that, oh, it’s meant to divert attention from nonproliferation and from all other issues, but this is not the view of those – of the very promoters of the initiative, the original 16 countries and some of the others.

Should we work on getting India and Pakistan into the NPT? Yes, sure. Great, it would – it’s a fantastic idea, and the – (inaudible) – of the NPT is as a mantra we’ve been repeating, and it’s gotten so hollow it means nothing anymore. We repeat it every NPT meeting, and then we go and conclude a trade agreement with India and, you know, export nuclear materials and technologies. U.S. started, but then everybody else picks up because what you’re going to do?

So do I want them in the NPT? Yes, but if they – if there is no chance – if we ourselves destroyed the chance of getting them into the NPT, maybe we should stop clinging to that idea of getting them in and think of other ways we can engage them. And unlike the five nuclear weapons states, Isreal – India and Pakistan did show up in Oslo and did show up in Nayarit. Pakistan made a statement about safety and security of its arsenal. There were a lot of crickets in the room after that. But at least, you know, they kind of faced the people and told them what they think about their nuclear weapons, which is not the case with nuclear weapons states.

And I want to respond to the point about military planners can present you scenarios with possible legitimate or limited weapons use. Fine, they should go to Vienna and do that. Just come to Vienna and say, we understand your concerns; this is how we plan to use nuclear weapons if we ever need to. You know, if you have those policies, you have those weapons, well, stand up and explain what you mean by that. And that’s all. Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Ira.

MR. HELFAND: Yeah, a couple of points. I think with regards to the role of this – in the NPT or outside the NPT – this notion – and just to support what Gaukhar just said – this notion that this process in some way is undermining the NPT, I think, is – it’s the kind of thing that you can say – you can put words together and make a sentence any time you want to, but the people who have put forward from the nuclear weapon state side really have not been able to make any kind of a case for how this might be so.

In fact, this, I think, is enormously important to the preservation of the NPT. The NPT is in great – that whole regime is in great danger, but it’s not because people are talking about a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. It’s because there is a widespread perception that the nuclear weapons states are not living up to their obligations. And in fact, that’s true. They’re not.

So the question becomes, how do we move the process forward? Well, people could just abandon the NPT, or they could try to engage in some kind of productive international diplomatic initiative to achieve the stated goals of the NPT, which is the elimination of nuclear weapons. And I think the people who have been advocating for this convention to ban nuclear weapons understand this is not the end stage; this is a way of trying to move the ball down the field, of trying to put some pressure
on those nuclear weapon states which are using the NPT process, frankly, to preserve their nuclear monopoly. And there’s just no patience left in this idea of acceptable nuclear apartheid.

And the nuclear weapons states have to understand that. They’re not going to get away with this. So they can, you know, insist on squashing – trying to squash efforts of this sort. And I think the result will be, ultimately, that the NPT process suffers a terrible blow, or they can welcome this as a way of meeting the requirements of article VI and as a way of demonstrating that, in fact, they are committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons. I think they’ve shot themselves enormously in the foot with the statement they released before Oslo and by the failure to attend Nayarit and would agree with everyone who has spoken about this that they need to show up in Vienna and participate in this conversation.

Let me stop there. Actually, can I also just say one thing about the idea of legitimate use of nuclear weapons? I think the nuclear weapon states have to be clear. They have to – they have to – they can’t have it both ways. They can’t say, it’s OK for us to have nuclear weapons because we’re never going to use them on the one hand, and on the other hand say, our policy is based on deterrence. For deterrence to work, we have to convince people that we will use them. You just can’t do this. It’s one or the other. You can’t say we’re never going to use nuclear weapons and then talk about the circumstances in which we can use them legitimately and safely and without it being a humanitarian disaster.

MR. PERKOVICH: You can.

MR. HELFAND: Well, you can talk like that, but you can’t convince anybody because it doesn’t make any sense.

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, it depends.

MR. HELFAND: Either you’re going to say that you’re never going to use them, or you’re going to say that you are going to use them. And if you’re going to say that you are going to use them, then if it’s OK for the U.S. to use them and to have them so we can use them, then how can you tell the rest of the world that we can’t? And the fact of the matter is, we have lost that argument. The rest of the world rejects that, and rightly so, because the argument is profoundly flawed.

MR. KIMBALL: So why don’t you come back to the question that was asked?

MR. PERKOVICH: Conference on disarmament is a place, if it worked, where India, Pakistan and Israel participate and reside, so you could address this issue through the conference on disarmament.

MR. KIMBALL: And if I could just press you a little bit further – I mean, you spent a great deal of time looking at the India-Pakistan nuclear conundrum and the issue of inside-outside the NPT has been around for a long time. I mean, what – given the deadlock at the CD, I mean, what other steps might India and Pakistan themselves take to contribute more to disarmament? What might non-nuclear weapon states be urging India and Pakistan to do to contribute more to disarmament?

You know, I find India’s support – speaking personally – for the timebound framework for nuclear disarmament to be elegant, but a little big disingenuous, since they know that that time might take quite a while. (Laughs.) So they get some credit for that rhetoric, but their actions say something else.

So, I mean, just, your thoughts, George, beyond what might happen with the FMCT and the CD?

MR. PERKOVICH: Yeah, I mean - the – I think it’s the case that you can’t get anywhere with India and Pakistan if the focus is on nuclear weapons, because the drivers are something entirely different. So the driver in Pakistan is India’s conventional capability. The driver in India is Pakistan’s use of terrorism. Nothing to do with nuclear weapons.

Now, nuclear weapons get involved because if Pakistan conducts a big terrorist – or if actors
associated with Pakistan conduct another big terrorist attack in India, India may use its conventional military force against Pakistan, at which point Pakistan says it'll use nuclear weapons.

But coming in like we do, talking about nuclear weapons, they – on either side, they both go, what, are you deaf and blind? Not that there’s anything wrong with that, but it’s – you know, you’re missing what the real drivers are here. And so you have to address those issues in order to even – to get them to stop laughing, basically. And unless and until we do that, they know all the lines, so the Indians have the line that they have – we want a timebound framework, which suits them well – we go, OK, that put them in their place.

And the Pakistanis have their line of, they want a fissile material cutoff that actually gets at existing stockpiles and is a disarmament treaty, which, when you talk to them about it, it’s an absurd – I mean, it’s an absurd position which the military will laugh about if you actually get them in private and say, you know, so this is your position, but they’re very comfortable having their diplomat say it. So I – to me, that discourse is pretty much irrelevant.

MR. KIMBALL: Yes, sir, you had a question.

MR. PERCAYA: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIMBALL: I’m sorry – Desra, and then, while the microphone comes up. So go ahead.

MR. PERCAYA: Thank you, Daryl. Just very short, in response to your question, I think there is a possibility to bring these convention on nuclear weapons as well as FMCT to the general assembly. That is also one possibility.

MR. KIMBALL: Yeah.

Q: Thank you very much. I’m Mohammed Khaled (sp); I’m a physician. My job is prevention. And pardon my sarcasm. I think all four of you have missed the boat. Number one, there were six very serious incidents between Soviet Union and United States, when nuclear went from one to six. Brzezinski and Carter was awakened once; Boris Yeltsin’s finger was inch away to press the button. So number one.

Number two, nuclear accidents – probability of a single nuclear bomb detonation has gone up since Cold War. Maybe the governments have better communication and command and control, and today’s one bomb, which was on Titan II missile in Arkansas in 1980 has power of nine megaton, which means it has more lethal power, if it would have went off, combined all the bombs used in World War II, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Third –

MR. KIMBALL: If you could come to your question, because, I mean –

Q: Yes, yes. My question is, NPT – NPT is like putting dust into the eyes of the people. Number one, China is testing hypersonic. United States military industry is asking $1 trillion, Russia has put in Lithuania and Kazakhstan. So why you all four are not looking at those issues from this angle rather than political and, like, governmental type of – that’s what my question is.

MR. KIMBALL: Well, one thing I would just say – and I don’t mean to be flip – is that it’s difficult to organize a panel that talks about the dozens of different ramifications of the questions that we’re raising here. So many of us on the panel and in the audience are well aware of those – that history and some of those challenges. So we’re taking one side of this issue and I think each of us are struggling with how we can move forward to deal with the challenges that are out there, which the additional challenges you’re mention.

But let me just ask Gaukhar – you had, I think, an intervention with the previous question –

MS. MUKHATZHANOVA: And this one, too.
MR. KIMBALL: And this one, too.

MS. MUKHATZHANOVA: Yeah, first of all, thank you for reminding me about the risk of nuclear weapons use, and this was – this is not missing from the humanitarian discourse. It was actually a very powerful presentation narrated by Patricia Lewis – Dr. Patricia Lewis from the Chatham House, and with Heather Williams, they presented their study on the near uses of nuclear weapons and about how the risk of use remains as long as, you know, the weapons exist. So it’s not missing, and you’re quite right to point it out. And I think it will – it will probably develop further in the discourse about that in the humanitarian initiative.

Why we’re focusing on the political debate? Because we’re talking about the NPT today, and fundamentally, NPT review conferences are political conferences, and that’s been part of the problem, you’re right, because we started talking in the stratosphere without discussing the actual risks and the actual effects of potential nuclear weapons use. And that’s part of the humanitarian initiative point, to try to change that. So I hope that will have an effect in 2015 and beyond.

But I wanted to come back on the role – what can nonnuclear weapon states do to call on India and Pakistan to sort of prod them? And I think you’re very right to point it out. And again, because of the nature of the arrangement – the nonnuclear weapon states giving the promise in the NPT, and the five recognized nuclear weapon states giving a promise to disarm the NPT, the focus entirely has been on the five, because they’ve actually committed to the treaty, including article VI, to pursue disarmament commitments. India and Pakistan have not done that.

So just as we say that Israel is not bound by the decisions of the 2010 review conference and has a right not to show up at the Middle East conference in Helsinki, we can also say India and Pakistan have a right to pursue whatever policies, because they never promised anything. And that’s part of the problem of our relationship with India and Pakistan, because they never promised anything, we’re not making them promise anything.

And it’s not just a problem of nuclear weapon states, it’s a problem of non-nuclear weapon states, particularly the non-aligned movement states, because non-aligned has been the banner carrier for disarmament since the beginning of the nuclear age. India was the biggest carrier of that banner until they actually acquired their own arsenal, and I think it’s the non-aligned movement’s responsibility also to turn to their own members and question their motivations and question their statements and question the actual sincerity of their support for disarmament, for the time-bound convention. And again, humanitarian initiative – bringing those countries in – I think it will help a lot of non-aligned countries to also look beyond the NPT and ask their fellow members about their policies and what they mean to do with their nuclear weapons.

MR. KIMBALL: All right. Thank you. I think we have a question in the back, please – Arjun Makhijani –

Q: Thank you. I’m Arjun Makhijani. (Off-mic exchange.)

MR. KIMBALL: I think you just turned out our lights, Arjun. Please enlighten us; don’t – (laughter) –

Q: I didn’t mean to put everybody in the dark. Sorry about that.

MR. KIMBALL: There we go. Thank you.

Q: Arjun Makhijani, Institute for Energy and Environmental Research. You know, over the years, there have been many proposals by states and by NGOs to reduce the risk of the kind of humanitarian catastrophe that Ira talked about. The two most prominent ones, in my view, have been, you know, ideas about low first use, and ideas about reducing the alert level of – especially of U.S. and Russian weapons.

My friend, Admiral Ramdas, whom many of you know – retired chief of the Indian Navy – proposed to me informally some time back – and I don't think this has been introduced as an idea to reduce risk –
of combining these two and proposing some kind of a nuclear ceasefire. I like the nuclear ceasefire concept, because you reduce the alert, and essentially, you promise not to use first, but you’re packaging the thing in a different – I think in a different strategic – it’s not just packaging – presenting a different strategic concept. I’d like Ms. Mukhatzhanova’s comment on that for the – or comment from anybody in the panel, but especially for its relevance for the 2015 NPT review.

MR. KIMBALL: Yeah. Let me invite each of you to respond to Arjun’s question – suggestion, and let me just also ask you to take one other thing into consideration, which is that, you know, we heard from Ira Helfand, in his presentation, the suggestion that one of the implications of the findings on humanitarian consequences – nuclear weapons use is that we need to move towards the banning of nuclear weapons.

That was a suggestion made by many of the nongovernmental organizations in Nayarit in Mexico, by the Mexican diplomat who provided his personal summary of the conference – he talked about pursuing a diplomatic process and the next stages, but it appears to me that there is not a lot of clarity about what to ban, how this might be packaged – Arjun is putting together yet another variation.

So, let’s keep in mind that there are several theoretical possibilities for how – if there is a diplomatic process emerging from the humanitarian consequences initiative – several different directions this could go in, and they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

There could be a process leading to the negotiation of a convention on the elimination of nuclear weapons. There could be a process leading to a ban on the possession and use, but not necessarily a whole treaty that tries to effect the elimination. There could also be a legally binding instrument that bans the use of nuclear weapons, as we saw the international community doing in the 1920s in response to chemical weapons use during World War I.

So there are these different variations, and Arjun, you’ve presented yet another variation that might involve practical steps with respect to no-first-use pledges and reducing the alert status of the deployed arsenals. So if I could ask you all to respond with these variations in mind and to provide your thoughts on some of the pros and cons and the possibilities and the hurdles as you see in them. Who wants to start? All right – Ira.

MR. HELFAND: I think, you know, the idea that there should be a nuclear cease-fire, universal adherence to a no-first-use policy – I think those would be a very useful step forward. There are many steps that we can take. The problem is we’re not taking any of them at the moment. Ultimately, what we need is a nuclear weapons convention – a negotiated instrument, negotiated by all the countries which have nuclear weapons as well as the non-nuclear weapon states – that sets out exactly how we’re going to step-by-step dismantle the existing arsenal – so sort of an extension of the New START treaty writ large – how we’re going to take the weapons apart, what the timetable’s going to be, what the verification mechanisms are going to be, and what the enforcement mechanisms are going to be.

The nuclear ban treaty that’s been proposed is not that. It is a political tool to try to create pressure to get to a nuclear weapons convention. And what has been proposed is a treaty which bans not just use, but also possession, to make the point that these weapons should not be maintained, even when countries say they’re never going to use them, because of the very clear fact that the countries that say they’re never going to use them in fact do have plans for using them. And, as one of my colleagues has argued, in fact use them every day. They don’t detonate them every day, but they use their possession of nuclear weapons to intimidate and bully the rest of the world. And so something that simply says that we will not detonate the weapons would be useful as well – the use in that sense – that would be a useful step, but it would be even more useful to say – to have an international norm created that says that it is illegitimate to possess these weapons, that any country which possesses these weapons, including the United States and Russia – the big countries – they are defining themselves as rogue states by their continued possession of these weapons. So that’s, I think, the impetus, the thrust behind the nuclear ban treaty, at least as I’ve understood it. But that’s one of many things that we could do at this point to try to move the situation forward.
If this administration in the United States, which is so allergic to the idea of a ban treaty, put forward any significant initiative at this point, I think we would all rally behind it. But that hasn’t been forthcoming since New START was negotiated. And so that’s a great idea. I’m sure there are other great ideas out there. At the moment the one which seems to be getting the most traction is a ban treaty. I think it’s an exceptionally good move, because it really does move things forward in a very dramatic way and I would encourage people to support that, but I think if other ideas come forward, you know, it’s fine – whatever moves the ball forward. We’ve just got to get some movement in the right direction and we’re not getting it right now.

MR. KIMBALL: Others? George.

MR. PERKOVICH: Just very briefly, one point is – the ban treaty idea may be great among some states but I would venture to say it actually is counterproductive with the states that you’re ultimately trying to affect, because I can tell you that allied countries of the United States are going back to the United States privately, saying this makes them very apprehensive, reassure us you’re going to keep your nuclear weapons and so on. So it has – it has a perverse effect in that way, with allies. And so if one can deal with –

MR. HELFAND: Does it create that thought on their part, or does it just get them to express it?

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, I think they were nervous when President Obama did the Prague speech. That made them nervous. And then, I think, as they see kind of this happening, they get further nervous and express it privately to the U.S. And then since the Prague speech you have what’s happened in Crimea, you have the intensification of the dispute over the uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, which has made, you know, Vietnam, Philippines, Japan and others more apprehensive. So I think they’re more apprehensive now even than they were in 2009, and so they express that.

MR. HELFAND: Can I just comment – you know, I think that their apprehension is quite real. A lot of people around the world think that nuclear weapons make them more secure. It’s our job to help them understand that isn’t true –

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, I agree with that.

MR. HELFAND: That the nuclear weapons make them less secure. And so the humanitarian campaign is trying, I think, to really get that message through to many, many people who don’t get it.

MR. PERKOVICH: I agree with that and I would say the same thing about, you know, automatic weapons in the U.S. and everything else. But you see what happens when it looks like you’re going to ban something; it actually mobilizes the people who are most worried and you actually get a worse result of a weakening of gun laws around the country and a recall of politicians who were advocating gun control. So I’m just saying there can be consequences that are unintended.

But I – just on Arjun’s point, seems to me, beyond no first use, that an effort, and Ira alluded to this with the people who were thinking about a convention – nuclear disarmament’s never been defined. We don’t know what it means. There’s not a full-time official in any of the states that possess nuclear weapon (sic) whose job it’s been to figure, OK, how would we actually dismantle these things? How would we verify it? What would we do with our weapons laboratories? How would we monitor other people’s weapons scientists? Would we agree to regulate their travel? What kind of dual-use experiments would be allowed? How do you manage missile technologies?

None of that’s been done. So as a starter, you know, that would be a useful thing. Not only to have people on the outside do it, but to try to at least task or get the governments to agree that they’ll appoint one person, you know, maybe more would be great, but at least one full-time person to be thinking through, you know, how you would actually do this. And every once in a while, they could have coffee with each other and say, well, what do you got? (Laughter.) And advance the ball.

MR. KIMBALL: That’s a good idea. Ambassador Percaya.
MR. PERCAYA: Daryl, I’m not going to reply to Arjun’s question, but to your earlier question.

I think four points. First, ideally, nuclear weapon states have to take part and engage in the process on the humanitarian consequences. But one thing that’s for sure, we cannot force them to attend. That’s why my second point is that we have to make condition for them to make it comfortable to join the process. Next will be in April, NPT. Perhaps we can have some dialogue among the proponents of the humanitarian consequences with the P-5, because there has been no dialogue on this. Certainly, there has been some apprehension among the P-5 about the legitimation of the nuclear weapons, et cetera. And thirdly, when there is a diplomatic conference, I think we should go ahead with or without nuclear weapon states. I think that there has been some examples in which, finally, we can have international treaty or agreement without the participation of the P-5.

And lastly, last year in General Assembly, in the First Committee, we adopted a resolution on the high-level meeting, and one of the operative paragraph is on the establishment of comprehensive convention on nuclear disarmament, including the use, the stockpiling, the banning – everything. And there is also a timeframe in which, within five years – within five years – there will be international conference. I think this should also be seen – I mean the humanitarian consequences process should also be seen within the context of the convening of the international conference in 2018. Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Thank you very much. And Gaukhar –.

MS. MUKHATZHANOVA: I’m glad that Doctor Helfand addressed the question about no first use, possible nuclear cease-fire. India actually proposed a no-first-use kind of treaty in Nayarit. The nuclear weapon states were not there to hear or respond to it, so it didn’t get really any response there, but it’s an interesting proposal. But that – that would cut against the current policies of a number of nuclear weapon states, right? Most of them, actually, except China. So that would provoke a very serious reconsideration about the role of nuclear weapons, and I don’t know – I don’t think they’re ready. But it would be good if they actually started that kind of conversation. And P-5 consultations – or P-5 consultations they potentially were – remain, probably – one of the avenues where the five nuclear weapon states can talk about their use policies. But as far I understand, they didn’t progress very much in that direction.

Similarly, on reducing alert levels, you know, there is an annual resolution at the U.N. General Assembly, because the same states that are promoting humanitarian initiative, a lot of them are also involved in the de-alerting coalition, and they asked for the reduction in the launch-on-warning status. Now, the thing here is that nuclear weapon states perhaps need to get over their allergy to proposals coming from non-nuclear weapon states, because that’s been a consistent theme in their response to the de-alerting coalition, because they say you don’t understand how alerting works and how it would destabilize things. So then, similarly, they’ve ignored the open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament negotiations, where they also could safely come in and talk about different steps they propose or plan to undertake in terms of disarmament. So – and the same goes for the humanitarian initiative. I think the – this is – and it is a fundamental issue. They need to engage in a dialogue in a very – in a very honest fashion, and not just on their terms that they use to dictate in the NPT setting and in the Conference on Disarmament.

And on the ban proposal, I think there’s a great deal of confusion among states themselves about what the ban proposal means. There is no unified coalition saying this is what we need. There is a very unified coalition in the civil society about the need for a ban. ICAN has been doing a very – has been very active in promoting that, including in the allied states that Dr. Perkovich mentioned. But among states themselves, there is no clear understanding what a ban treaty would mean. There is no clear understanding who would support it, how to negotiate it. So I think the concern among nuclear weapon states may be a little bit overstated about the determination that exists within the humanitarian initiative. But if they continue to ignore the conversation, they will have less and less impact. They’ll have less and less contribution and it will go places where they really don’t want it to go, so we think they should engage.

MR. KIMBALL: All right. Thank you much. We have a question here.
Q: Thank you for the panel. My name is Rebecca Gibbons and I’m a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at RAND this year, and my question is about the prognosis for the NPT regime broadly. There’s been no shortage of pessimism about the treaty, and in my research, you know, this goes back to the ’70s, so hearing that we’re at a tipping point or we’re going over a cliff – that doesn’t seem to be new.

Dr. Helfand said there’s no patience left. And so my question is, for someone who’s trying to analyze the NPT and understand it, what would – what would it look like if it were really falling apart? What would the initial sort of cracks be that we would see, you know, before people maybe leave the treaty, but how would we really know that’s happening when we’ve had years and years of people saying it’s falling apart?

And then, I’m wondering what leverage do the nuclear – do the non-nuclear weapon states have? It seems ‘95 was a key point of leverage. They got maybe minor concessions, and then we go to the status quo. So where is this going and how is it going to change?

MR. KIMBALL: All right. Good questions. George, Gaukhar – you want to start us off?

MS. MUHATZHANOVA: Do you?

MR. PERKOVICH: Go ahead.

MS. MUHATZHANOVA: OK. Thank you very much for that question. I was bothering, I think, diplomats a lot with the question: What do you mean NPT’s falling apart? What do you mean the regime is in danger? I mean, how – what’s it going to look like? And personally think about it, I don’t think we’re looking at a tipping point beyond which there is this fantastic breakdown and an abyss. Treaties – multilateral, large treaties don’t go that way.

What I’m concerned about is that the countries that used to be very committed to the treaty will find it less and less relevant – less and less relevant to their security, less and less relevant to their identity, who they are, and so they will pay less attention to what’s going on. And they will not send their top-notch diplomats to NPT review conferences to negotiate the next consensus and a common understanding about, you know, the world’s perception of what nuclear weapons – of how to proceed on nuclear weapons disarmament and nonproliferation. And it won’t be a dramatic collapse – you know, we wake up on May, whatever, 28th, 2015, and boom we don’t have NPT. What I fear is that it’s going to go the Disarmament Commission way. Who cares about Disarmament Commission, by the way, in the U.N.? Yeah, I didn’t think so. It hasn’t produced anything since 1999. People go in there and they talk, but nothing comes out. The CD’s become a joke, and we keep talking about revitalizing it, but seriously – how long will that – will that last? What do they do in the CD? And similarly, that’s what I’m concerned about – that the regime will not collapse – it’s more the situation of the frog, you know, and being slowly heated up and not noticing that it’s about to be cooked and eaten.

And what implications would that have? Are non-nuclear weapon states going to massively go and acquire nuclear weapons? No, again, it won’t be massive. But you’ll have less and less of this unifying framework to respond to proliferation cases, for example. There won’t be a massive outrage about, you know, Iran cheating for 18 years or about North Korea walking out, or – you know, oh who cares? Maybe, you know, maybe you do need all the separated plutonium, country X. Maybe you do need all the high-enriched uranium, country Y. And so this – it’s going to be just this across-the-board weakening of international position about whether or not pursuit of nuclear weapons is bad. And yeah, I think it will just increase the risks.

MR. KIMBALL: Anybody else want to add to that thorough answer right now?

MR. PERKOVICH: Just briefly. I mean, it’s a good question. I would say Iran is enormously important, as in answer to your question. If the Iranian challenge to the nonproliferation regime is resolved...
peacefully in a way that most people go, OK, at least, you know, there’s a couple of years’
confidence that they can’t break out, then it will – that would significantly strengthen the process.

Conversely, if that doesn’t happen and there’s a war, or Iran is perceived to, you know, kind of get
much closer to nuclear weapons, then I would say, OK, well, that’s a failure of the system at the job
that it was fundamentally set up to do. And so then – but I agree that you wouldn’t have, like, a
rapid cascade of, then, other states doing it, but you’d see a lot more hedging.

Then the next thing would be to South Korea – get permission to do reprocessing and enrichment,
which the U.S. would have to grant it. So you start seeing some more hedging, but I think Iran’s the
super important case.

MR. KIMBALL: All right. We had a question over here. Ashley (sp), up front here. Up one more – two
more. Thank you.

Q: Thanks. Rob Anderson from the Dutch Embassy. In about 10 days the Non-Proliferation and
Disarmament Initiative will gather in Hiroshima, and they will for sure also discuss – debate the
humanitarian consequences. I would like to pose a question to the panel: How do you see the role
of ad hoc coalitions like the NPDI in this debate?

Maybe George and Gaukhar can say something about that, but also I want to pose the question
specifically to the Indonesian ambassador because the Indonesian foreign minister is – (inaudible).
Thank you.

MS. MUKHATZHANOVA: Ambassador Percaya, aren’t you going to speak at the ministerial?

AMB. PERCAYA: No, I – you first.

MS. MUKHATZHANOVA: (Chuckles.) All right. Coalitions – OK, you probably all are familiar with the
NPT structure, but there are three kind of outdated groupings that are built into the NPT system. You
have the Western states and others – Western European states and others, you have Eastern
European group, and you have the NAM, and the three have their own sort of pet issues – or rather
two, because Eastern European group is completely solid.

But what has been very important at different points in the NPT history is the role of the cross-
grouping coalitions, the like-minded coalitions. And the New Agenda Coalition was particularly
important, for example, in 2000 because they were able to bring together countries from different
regions, countries from the Non-Aligned Movement, countries from Western Europe – so countries
with a lot of legitimacy on the nonproliferation and disarmament issues that were able to engage in a
very adult conversation with nuclear weapons states and bring the nonnuclear weapons states
onboard.

And then we had a period of the fall-down of those coalitions. There was a lot less interest in doing
that and the NAC had its internal problems in terms of defining purpose after 2000 NPT Review
Conference. NPTI is a new – is a new development in this regard, and a lot of people are kind of
skeptical about the role NPTI because it’s dominated by allies of the United States. But then they’ve
enlarged the coalition recently, including the Philippines and Nigeria, so I’m personally very curious
to see what comes out of the next ministerial, whether that addition would change the tone, change
some of the positions of NPTI.

I think they have been very important in promoting transparency. And because they, most of them,
are allies and friends with the United States, they were able to maybe approach them on a different
level with their proposal on the standards reporting form. It was a very ambitious proposal and I
know the nuclear weapons states scaled it down a lot, but at least it set a very high benchmark, so it
was much harder to sort of roll back from it. And I think NPTI will continue to play that important role
in tabling sort of middle-ground proposals.

But can they lead sort of the non-nuclear weapons states en masse? I have my doubts but I think it’s
important to see some other coalitions emerging. There are some countries that are supporting a
humanitarian initiative. I’d like to see how they engage in the conversation with the – with the nuclear weapons states at the next REFCON (ph) to forge maybe some new language on the humanitarian dimension and find a compromise there. And the NAC is kind of reinvigorated so it’s an interesting coalition still to watch

MR. KIMBALL: Ambassador Percaya, George, any thoughts?

AMB. PERCAYA: Thank you for the question. Yes, Indonesia foreign minister will attend the meeting in Hiroshima. I think Indonesia is also, at the time being, chair of the Non-Aligned Movement for the disarmament. We are going, certainly, to convey our, quote, unquote, “grievances” with regard to the implementation of NPT, also the unbalanced implementation on the three pillars. And certainly, which is very important, we are going to also encourage nuclear weapons states to take the lead and give example, because they have more responsibility on these issues. Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: All right –

MR. PERKOVICH: Just briefly –

MR. KIMBALL: – George?

MR. PERKOVICH: No, I agree with both comments, and I think NPDI can be very influential. There’s a paradox because some of them are allied to the U.S. and some of them are internally split, their governments, or their parliaments and their governments. But I think because it’s also – there are some leading middle powers, all the more important at least to try to reach out into Russia and, you know, try to reach North Korea and China. The other states – that frankly are a greater source of resistance to this agenda than the United States is – France, but that’s hopeless but, you know – so more amendable states like North Korea and Russia, I think – (laughter) – would be – would be useful.

MR. KIMBALL: All right, let’s take a couple questions at a time. Let’s take one from this side, right – take your pick – and then we’ll have another one here on the other side.

Q: Dean Rusk, retired State Department. As I hear you talk about humanitarian consequences and the importance of eliminating nuclear weapons eventually, I think of other forums on nuclear terrorism that I go to all the time where the same issues are there. That is, the people who are supporting strong efforts against nuclear – preventing nuclear terrorism talk about the fact that nuclear weapons can’t be around forever; we have to eventually eliminate them. And they focus a lot on humanitarian consequences as a way of pushing their agenda.

So I wonder if you thought about how you might be able to leverage that overall movement to kind of give a little extra push to what you’re trying to do within the NPT. Understand, the NPT does not bind nuclear terrorists, but the United States has tried to bring some of the nuclear terrorism issues into the NPT forum. It just seems to me there might be a way to leverage the nuclear terrorism theme as a way to give an additional political push for what you’re doing.

MR. KIMBALL: All right, thank you. And then over here, Ed?

Q: Edward Ifft, Georgetown University. Thanks for a very rich discussion. I just got back last night from a conference in Berlin on European arms control issues, and it was rather discouraging, as you can imagine. The Russians were there. NATO officials were there – representatives of various European countries. The most alarming thing for me was the feeling that today NATO would not be able to reaffirm the three no’s. That is, that NATO has no intention, no need and no plan to move nuclear weapons into Eastern Europe. This is because the East Europeans now are quite paranoid about what’s happening in Ukraine.

And then just one comment. I mean, I’m sure it’s obvious to everyone in this room, but it needs to be repeated at every opportunity: Further nuclear proliferation would make all of these problems worse.
MR. KIMBALL: All right, reactions, comments to this. Ira?

MR. HELFAND: Yeah, I think one of the ways that the nuclear terrorism concerns intersect with the need for – with the NPT issues is the nature that nuclear terrorism apt to take in the future, and we tend to think of this in the context of a dirty bomb or perhaps even a small nuclear explosion going off in a city. But, you know, frankly, the most disturbing possibility of nuclear terrorism would be a cyberattack which causes the – you know, the launch of one of – of a system, either in the Russian or the U.S. arsenal.

And this is obviously something which would be quite complicated and quite difficult but it’s not beyond the realm of possibility. And the fact that there are people who would seek to use – terrorists who would seek to use nuclear weapons I think in this – in that context underscores the absolute necessity for getting these weapons off of their high-alert status in particular, and ultimately for getting rid of them.

To the question that was suggested by Ed’s comment, you know, obviously the situation in Ukraine is making things – you know, sort of juggling the whole picture a little bit and making people look at things very differently. And not surprisingly, the initial reaction of many people on this I think is to sort of seek greater strength. That’s what we usually do when we’re threatened. And so there’s been a lot of talk already about, you know, this means we can’t make progress towards nuclear disarmament at this time.

I think the more profound lesson of the Ukraine crisis, the one which I hope will emerge over – as people have a little bit more time to think about this, is the lesson that we did learn during the Cold War, that it’s precisely when there was a great danger of war between nations that it is particularly important that those nations not be armed with nuclear weapons.

You know, I don’t know what Putin is going to do next if this is simply a one-off going into Crimea, or if this is part of a much broader and profoundly dangerous effort to undo the great tragedy of the 20th century, in his eyes, and reconstitute the Soviet Union. Obviously if the latter is the case, we’re in for a very, very dangerous and difficult time. But the most dangerous and difficult aspect of that would be if nuclear weapons come into play. And I think, frankly, that what the lesson from the Ukraine crisis should be is the – an increased understanding of the urgency of moving towards nuclear disarmament.

At the height of the Cold War, when things were even more tense than they are between the U.S. and Russia right now, Gorbachev and Reagan made the decision that we needed to move towards lessening of the nuclear tension towards nuclear disarmament. They came close to agreeing at Reykjavik to getting rid of the weapons altogether. Unfortunately we don’t have a Gorbachev-like figure who is self-identified at this point who can sort of move things forward in a big way, but perhaps one will emerge.

And I think we have to - we have to play to the possibility of that happening. Short term, medium term, these weapons need - we need to have a fundamentally different approach than the one we have. What we’ve been doing up to this point simply has not worked. The weapons are still there in numbers which make the arsenals of today not functionally different in their threat to human survival than they were at the worst moment of the Cold War. We can still do it many times over and we have to get beyond that situation.

The humanitarian message, I think, is the key to that. The thing that motivated Gorbachev, according to his memoirs, to take the initiatives which he took in the 1980s were the conversations he had with physicians from my organization, in which they explained to him what was going to happen if the weapons were used. And remarkably, as the head of a nuclear power, he didn’t fully understand what was going to happen if a nuclear war took place. And I will tell you, I think the same is true of most of the leaders of the nuclear weapons states today, including people in our administration who, for example, I know are not familiar with the dangers of limited nuclear war in the Nuclear Famine report because they’re surprised when we get a chance to meet with them and give them this data, as recently as three weeks ago.
So I think there is an enormously important role for the NGO community and for civil society to get that message out as perhaps the most important thing we can do to try to create the conditions where perhaps a fundamental change, a transformational change, in nuclear policy can take place. I certainly can’t guarantee it’s going to happen, but I think this is our best shot at achieving that.

MR. KIMBALL: If I could just take a moment to comment on Ed’s intervention briefly. And, you know, the issue of Ukraine is not the specific topic today but it is on everybody’s minds and it’s relevant to whether and how the nuclear weapons states can make progress. Let me just say a couple things.

Yes, of course, at the moment the mood in Berlin or any European capital is – is gloomy as a result of Ukraine. A lot of bad reminders of the darkest days of the Cold War come back when we look at this situation. But, you know, it’s clear so far that the United States and Russia do not want to link the political tensions over Russia’s aggression in Crimea to the nuclear security or the nuclear arms control agenda.

For now, the instruments that were negotiated to reduce U.S.-Russian nuclear numbers and tensions are still operating. They do provide a greater level of transparency, information, predictability that is especially important in these tense times. New START inspections continue. Open Skies Treaty overflights continue. OSCE is operating, perhaps not as well as it should but it’s still operating.

So those instruments of – arms control instruments that originated out of the Cold War days are still working and are still vital. The real question that I think we need to ask – and we can’t answer it at this particular time, less than a month out from the invasion of Crimea – is, you know, how can the United States and Russia continue to make progress to reduce their still-bloated stockpiles?

And I will posit that, you know, new approaches need to be pursued other than what has been tried up to this time. Russia had already rebuffed U.S. suggestions about a further one-third cut below New START levels. Both sides are going to have to be clear-eyed and creative and recognize that it’s still both in their interest to further reduce, rather than to stop this process.

But that’s a conversation for another time. My organization, along with some of our German colleagues and Russian colleagues, will be speaking about this at the end of this month – in April, to release some findings and recommendations about how to deal with Euro-Atlantic security. But you know, this is a very important issue. It also requires some new and fresh thinking.

So I think we had some other questions in the back here, if you can just raise your hands again. Yes, right here, with the dark hair. And I think we’ve got time for maybe one or two more questions. Thanks.

Q: Hello. Lecia Dressman (sp), independent researcher. I’ll make this brief. I’ll be a little heretic here. Part of my reservations about multilateral disarmament agreements – we’ll say convention here, although I know that the terms haven’t been discussed – is that both the U.S. and Russia, whenever we have opportunities to pursue bilateral arms reductions, you know, (so their rep ?) – (inaudible) – will say, oh, we want a multilateral discussion with all of the P-5 on, you know – or – and then D.C. will come back and say, oh, no, we wanted it to be conditional on Moscow’s involvement and just bilateral. None of them seem to be pushing for unilateral or bilateral cuts, which is the obviously the priority.

So how can – how can – my question: How can this discussion on humanitarian weapons push – although I know it’s everyone in (NWBC ?) – push the two countries that in my opinion matter the most, the United States and Russia? Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Well, I’ve got an answer to that question, but we’ve got four great panelists here.

Other thoughts on this? Specifically, what can the humanitarian consequences process do specifically to push the U.S. and Russia to accelerate the pace of – I suppose you’re talking about numerical reductions but also other actions.

MR. PERKOVICH: I mean, the U.S. is clearly ready and eager to do that. The military strategic
command have already said, as Daryl alluded, that as far as they’re concerned, we could do fine with about 1,100 operationally deployed strategic weapons. That’s a reduction from New START. So it’s kind of clear that we’ve got all the permissions that would be necessary to do it and are kind of waiting from – a sense from Moscow that Moscow would be prepared to do that jointly.

Similarly, when it comes to weapons based in Europe, at least up until a couple of months ago, it was clear that the U.S. military would just as soon take those weapons out of Europe. Others would too. I think Ukraine changes that, but if the Russians are prepared to engage on that issue, which they’re not, you know, we’d be prepared to move.

So I think the discussion is – mostly needs to be had on that issue in Moscow, and what they will tell you then is, they’re more concerned about conventionally armed strategic systems and conventional capabilities and the support of groups that are trying to subvert Russia through perverse ideologies and homosexuality, so on and so forth. And so you have to address those issues. That’s the discussion that you’ll get back from Moscow.

MR. HELFAND: Having said that – and I agree; I think that at the moment the major stumbling block is in Moscow. But I think there are things the U.S. can do unilaterally, and we should. You know, the big stumbling block in the ’80s was here in Washington, and Gorbachev took some unilateral initiatives that were incredibly important. If he hadn’t, we would still be testing nuclear weapons, probably.

So I think the U.S., having determined that it doesn’t need more than 1,100 warheads – and as I’ve discussed, 1,100 warheads, you know, kills everybody on the planet several times over – having determined to our satisfaction that we can get by with 1,100 warheads, perhaps we should make a unilateral step in that direction, maybe not go to 1,100, maybe go to 1,350, and challenge the Russians to do it. They may reciprocate. They may not. We lose nothing if they don’t. We gain a great deal if they do. We actually gain something even if they don’t in terms of bolstering our position and our ability to move forward on other issues.

In terms of alert status of our weapons, we could take steps to diminish the alert status of our weapons. We could do that today, and we should do that today.

We could take our weapons out of Europe, and there would be some opposition from our European allies, and I don’t think U.S. nuclear policy can or is dictated by Estonia. We should – we should start to take those weapons out.

So I think there are a number of things that the U.S. could do, and the way the humanitarian campaign could affect that is by helping people in the U.S. government understand why it’s important that they do that, that we cannot continue to maintain the status quo. Whatever we need to do, we have to take like a Franklin Roosevelt approach, because we’ve got to try to some things. Some of them may work. Some may not work. As long as it’s not things that are going to undermine our security, it’s OK to try them.

MR. KIMBALL: Gaukhar and then the ambassador. Go ahead.

MS. MUKHATZHANOVA: Well, I don’t have a short-term answer, but – the steps, but I wanted to go back to what the humanitarian initiative’s largely about. And I think that the step towards disarmament, rather than, you know, we’re going to reduce 200 more warheads, but the actual commitment to the actual elimination – that’s going to take a psychological shift. And I think that’s the wall we’ve hit so far. We’re prepared to talk about the steps on the margins, but we’re not – but not – but nuclear weapons states, that’s very, very fundamentally attached to the fact of possession of nuclear weapons and the fact of yielding that kind of power. I think the humanitarian initiative poses very sharply the question of, you know, are you prepared to use these weapons and face the consequences, and if not, then why do you have those weapons?

But that’s not a short-term answer. That’s going to be a longer-term – and in the shorter term, I think Dr. Helfand is right. There are things that the United States can do unilaterally. And it’s a matter of – in the short term, it’s a matter of coming to the 2015 review conference and standing
next to Russia and next to France and being – we are just like them. Is the United States ready to do that? Does the United States want to do that, considering that this administration is decidedly not like them? And it will come down – I don’t know; I mean, I hope that this will – this conversation will happen at the White House at some point – is the question of President Obama’s international legacy. He started off his presidency with the Prague speech. Is he going to – is he going to go out and say, well, Russia didn’t want to negotiate on 200 more warheads?

So I think the United States has some things to deliver, and it can deliver them. It will be difficult domestically. Yes, it might, you know, really send a couple of Democratic senators into a fit about their future in the Senate if they allow this kind of thing to happen. But then again, it would come down to the question of what’s more important, the – you know, the domestic victories or really looking larger about the risks you’re posing for the rest of humanity?

MR. KIMBALL: Ambassador Percaya?

AMB. PERCAYA: Thank you very much, Mr. Kimball. I think this has been the complaint among the majority of Non-Aligned Movement, that the P-5 have agreed on the multilateral or conventional agreement, but very often when it comes to implementation, they would rather have done it bilaterally. This has been our complaint.

I think there is a limitation for nuclear – non-nuclear weapons state, especially Non-Aligned Movement. What we can do is make very loud and noise for this all the time. We – at the General Assembly, at the NPT. Then they will listen to us.

What we can do, I think – again, I think this is very much related to the general domestic dynamics/politics of each country. For example, the role of civil society in this country is very, very, very instrumental. But let’s not forget also the role of the youth. And if I can also ask – beg the question about how many senators and congressmen in the U.S. are aware of this, of disarmament? Because when you talk about disarmament with them, and that they will think of reduction instead of disarmament.

Thank you.

MR. KIMBALL: Thank you very much.

Well, not everyone supports operating by time-bound frameworks for certain goals, but I do in the context of this particular event, and we have reached the end of our time-bound framework. And I just want to thank each of the panelists for their excellent contributions and insights.

We’ve heard a lot of different perspectives this morning on the nature of the nuclear weapons challenge, how to address it. I think we can agree that leaders from the nuclear-armed states, the non-nuclear weapons states and leaders from civil society have to do more to consider and debate and come together around some creative and practical approaches to jump-start progress on disarmament in all of its aspects, as the ambassador just said, and to curb further proliferation and to guard against nuclear catastrophe.

So let me just mention one other set of words from one other important person that’s a good reminder about the task ahead. President Obama gave an address in Berlin in June, and he said:

“So long as nuclear weapons exist, we are not truly safe.

“Peace with justice means pursuing the security of a world without nuclear weapons, no matter how distant that dream may be.

“Complacency is not the character of great nations.”

So let’s not be complacent.

Please join me in thanking our panelists. (Applause.)
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